



GT127

Session Secrets

Shania Twain

In his first in a new six part series looking at different session styles, Dario Cortese demonstrates the skills required in country pop/rock...

Welcome to Session Secrets, a column dedicated to uncovering the creative and technical aspects of being a session guitarist. The month we're covering country pop rock, a broad style that is relatively open as regards to guitar roles. This being the case, we'll create a scenario - rock and country producer John 'Mutt' Lange requires guitar parts for a new song by Shania Twain. Shania is a leader in the 'new-country' movement blending pop and rock sensibilities into the traditional country sound.

The guitar is vital in country music, and Nashville is the country music capital of the world. If you are making a living as a studio player there you can consider yourself amongst the world's best session players. In Nashville they work to three main session times: 10am to 1pm, 2pm to 5pm and the last 6pm to 9pm: in this way they get an hour for lunch and dinner.

The first 20 minutes or so of the session are spent listening to the song, writing a chord chart (usually the 'leader' for that session writes one for everyone) and discussing the song with the producer. You have to be a quick learner! For the song, Lange requires rock Dann Huff style rock parts (something like Love Gets Me Every Time or You Win My Love) and a clean baritone guitar part a la Brent Mason. In Nashville, the chord chart would be in the Nashville Number System (more on it in GT 133) but we'll use a conventional chart.

Get familiar with the chords and the track's overall form, as you can then cross reference it to the forthcoming guitar parts. Guitar one and two are both in the style of Dann Huff, and they work together as question and answer. The first guitar will play on '1 and' and '3', whereas the second guitar will play on '1' and '2 and'; both use the same rhythm, but start



it in different places. Also, one uses a low voicing, and the other a contrasting higher voicing. This is because both reference tracks do this (it pays to know the genre!).

Now, grab a single-coil picking equipped guitar and set up a medium gain amp tone. You'll also need a compressor to provide punch; try sustain at 9 o'clock and volume at 12 o'clock. Don't use anything else especially reverb: it will be added in the mix if needed. Also, be carefull not to use too much gain as we need to hear an E major chord in open position. It's still country music! For the third part, Lange needs a Brent Mason kind of part on a baritone guitar. If you don't have a baritone guitar don't worry, you can 'fake' it. Plug your guitar into a small valve amp; we still need the compressor and we'll also use a very short delay (try 20ms, 0% feedback and 20% volume).

Tune the sixth string down to D (drop D tuning); this will mimic the deep sound of a baritone. The idea is to play a few fills in the lower register but leave room for the other instruments (fiddle, pedal steel, etc). For the ending, we need to come up with a short lick. The key is finding something that works, sounds original, but is stil stylistically correct.

Finally, note that on the backing tracks, only the final version has the verse repeat section. Also, see how the guitars are mixed to produce a coherent sound with all the parts blending. The idea with this sort of playing is to build up textures that dont' leap out as separate parts. See you next month!

♩ = 120 _A

5 _{F#m} _A

9 _D _E _A

13 _E _{F#m} _D _A _D _E _A

1.2.3. 4.



Gtr 1: This 'answer' guitar plays power chords in the lower register for the entire song.

Keep the strumming hand moving in a reasonably energetic way, and don't miss the dead string strums; they add vibe to this part.

Getting control of the instrument, whilst still being energetic is part of the challenge to this part.

Gtr 2: This guitar opens with a variation of the lick of guitar 1.

The lick rises at the end, rather than falling, and this leads directly to the higher register chord.

Again, keep the vibe up in the strumming hand.

Gtr 3: I used hybrid 'chicken picking' for this guitar.

Play the down strokes with the pick, and upstrokes with the second finger.

For the final lick, play the double stops with the fingers and the single notes with the pick.

tone settings

Gear for a country pop rock session? Time to buy an estate car! You'll need the following (or their equivalents); Strat, Tele, Gretsch, baritone, Les Paul/SG (for rocky or slide work) and various acoustic guitars.

For amps, it's a couple of Fender Deluxes or Twins (for stereo), a Matchless, Budda or Peavey.

For FX, it's any pedals you have kicking around. A compressor (MXR Dynacomp or Keeley), phaser (MXR Phase 90) and stereo delay (Line 6 DL4) are the main ones.

Finally, take pencils, a rubber and manuscript, a calculator for delay timings, and a selection of slides, picks, capos and strings (lots!).

Pro Tips

The baritone guitar is a guitar tuned a fourth down (low to high B E A D F# B). Suggested gauges would be .013 .017 .024 .036 .046 and .056. It's a very common guitar in country music and it usually plays low-register 'honky-tonk' style licks. The common models used by the top session players are the old Danelectro or the new version made by Jerry Jones.



Intro

♩ = 120

A

Gtr 1

full

5 4 (4) 5 2 4 2

2 2 2 0 4 2 0

2 2 0

12

Gtr 2

full

5 4 (4) 2 4

Gtr 3

E B G D A D

T A B

Verse

6 F#m A

full

2 4 2 4 X X X X

0 2 0 2 X X X X

2 2 2 2 5 5 5 5

4 4 4 7 7 7 7 12

2 2 2 2 0 2 2 2

optional w/bar-----|

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10

D E A

1.

TAB

0 2 2 0 X X 0 0 0 2 2 X X 0 2 0 2 X X

10 10 12 12 5 5 5 5

10 10 12 12 5 5 5 5

12 12 14 14 7 7 7 4

full

full

TAB

0 2 2 2 2 2 0

Breakdown

A E F#m D A

1.2.3.

TAB

0 2 0 2 X X X 0 2 3 2 0 2 0

12 12 0 2 0 2 0 2

5 5 X X 5 4 X 7 X X 3 5 5 5 4 2 4

7 12 0 2 0 2 0 2

full

TAB

0 2 2 2 2 2 0



4. **Ending**

D E A

TAB

TAB

TAB

TAB

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